Planet Money Podcast Now Coming to a Book Seller Near You

April 10, 2026 **by Dan McCue**

Members of the Planet Money team sign books after a launch event at NPR headquarters in Washington. (Photo by Dan McCue)

WASHINGTON — It's the award-winning podcast that just can't stay in its lane.

Started in 2008 to help National Public Radio listeners make sense of the global financial crisis, the Planet Money podcast has since given rise to a newsletter, a second hit podcast called The Indicator, a national broadcast radio program and even a TikTok channel.

And now, it's become a highly entertaining and informative book called, what else? "Planet Money: A Guide to the Economic Forces That Shape Your Life."

Written and illustrated by longtime contributor Alex Mayyasi and the Planet Money team, it promises, in 366 brisk, hard-bound pages, to share the podcast's "sharpest insights from more than a decade of reporting" about the "hidden forces shaping our world."

That it surely does in spades.

But on Thursday, it was book launch time at NPR's headquarters in Washington, where hosts Kenny Malone and Sarah Gonzalez spoke at length on, of all things, the asset bubble that grew up around alpaca, a llama-like animal that became all the rage in the early 2010s — until a market for their wool failed to materialize.

Malone and Gonzalez explained, often in hilarious fashion, that such agricultural bubbles are part and parcel of the American experience, extending all the way back to an investment craze in the 1810s focused on Merino sheep.

Since then, similar bubbles have arisen around Yorkshire hogs (in the 1830s), chinchillas (during World War I), and ostriches (in the 1980s).

In each case, some people did make money; in most, however, breeders and investors were left with near-worthless herds.

Later, a member of the studio audience gathered for the breakfast event, asked Malone and Gonzalez how they came up with their stories.

"It's a mix," Gonzalez said. "And that's because we're eight different hosts that all tend to follow our natural curiosities and interests."

"Kenny, for instance, clearly has been thinking about this asset story for a long time and was like, 'I'm going to look into this and come up with a different way to tell it,'" she continued.

"In other cases, it's a matter of a host saying, 'I really want to understand what's happening with this one thing.' It's not like you're just sitting there reading the internet to find out what your next story is, it's following your curiosity and getting ideas that way."

"The show comes out twice a week, and so it's important that each person that's involved in it brings something unique to the table," Malone said. "Sometimes, the ideas revolve around something that's obscure that they want to make less so … others are like this one, about the alpaca, that are more kind of fun to do.

"Ultimately though, our focus remains true to where we started," he said. "The show was sort of founded on explaining the global financial crisis to regular people … and our goal at all times continues to be to explain complicated financial things that everyone feels they need to understand but doesn't necessarily have that background."

In the case of the alpaca bubble story, Malone happened to come across the story of a Florida economics professor who was accused of being a disgruntled alpaca inseminator after he raised a red flag about the precarious nature of the alpaca wool market.

"I mean, what percentage of economics professors are going to have an amazing bar story like that?" Malone said.

"Odds are, the percentage is very small," he continued. "That's like a Gold tier quote, honestly, and as soon as I heard it I was like, 'I want to do a story about the alpaca bubble.'"

Among the brand-new stories the Planet Money team brings to their book is how AI could help you (or replace you), how one can decode the hidden rules of dating markets, and how pro sports'

"dumbest" contract might actually be a blueprint for building your retirement wealth.

Another longtime listener asked how the hosts decide which real time economic events to cover, and what to leave aside.

"It is true that a lot of what's happening now are big Econ stories," Malone said. "The Fed stuff, in particular, has been a big one. So we talk about it a lot. We have daily meetings where we ask each other, 'What are you reading?' 'What are you hearing?'

"The other thing we have to take into consideration is that our stories, generally, take a long time to do," he continued. "So, we have to have conversations about whether we can add something to the conversation if this piece isn't going to come out for another three weeks.

"In a way, it's kind of a bit closer to working on a magazine story, if you know what I mean," he said.

"It's a deeper dive," Gonzalez agreed. "For instance, with tariffs. We were like, 'This is a big story. We have to do a tariff story.' But everyone was doing a tariff story. So our Planet Money approach was, 'Let's follow the chain from, like, a small business owner or a medium-sized business owner, and they have to pay the tariff. … What are the ramifications of that?'

"And we said, 'Let's follow a ship that's traveling to the U.S. and now what the process is, in terms of paying the tariff, once they get here' … and the result was a 30-minute episode in which we could explain the whole chain of events and impacts that occurred as a result of the change in tariff policy," she said.

Gonzalez said while the topics Planet Money tackled are often weighty, "we really go out of our way to make sure that every

person we feature in our episodes, particularly the economic experts, are well-rounded human beings.

"That's because you want them to be connected to the piece and you want the audience to feel connected to them," she said. "So ideally you want them to share something personal, so that they don't come off as just another talking head expert."

"If we do our job well, it should seem sort of effortless and obvious that the thing we're talking about was a story," Malone said.

"Ideally, the craft is in taking something that doesn't necessarily seem like a story, and turning it into one," he said. "Otherwise, everyone else would have done it already.

"And going back to the process of who we choose to cover what we do, a lot of times, someone will pitch something that's not quite specific enough. They might have a feeling there's a story in a topic, but that feeling is not really strong enough to be a legitimate pitch.

"That's not anybody's fault. That's the nature of what we do … but hopefully, we make it seem easy, because sometimes it's not," he added.

In typical Planet Money fashion, the team didn't just publish a book, they've created a **podcast** series about the process of book publishing.

The team describes that new effort as being similar to the time when they founded a record label to release one song to crack how streaming payouts work, or when they bought 100 barrels of oil to understand the oil market.

"This time, we're tracing our book: from idea, to auction, to the global supply chain maze of actually printing it, to how the economics of bookselling are changing all the way up to how the

secretive best seller lists work (and the high stakes efforts to game it)," they said in a press release.

Planet Money is also embarking on a 12-city **book tour**, with stops planned at the 92nd Street Y in New York City and Politics and Prose here in Washington, D.C., as well appearances in Boston, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Boulder, Colorado and Toronto, Canada.

Also speaking at Thursday's event was Rachel Evans, who was named NPR's chief development officer late last year and is now driving its national fundraising efforts.

Evans recalled a running conversation she heard at a media conference in the past month in which a number of industry professionals were "freaking out" about their inability to engage young people, particularly when it came to news.

"I heard one person on stage say that if they ever dared make a video longer than 60 seconds that they'd lose a sizable portion of their audience … they considered 60 seconds just too long … and it really depressed me because I think, as a lot of us in this room know, that there is nothing that is valuable and worthwhile and worth knowing that you can really, confidently distill in a video lasting just 60 seconds," Evans said.

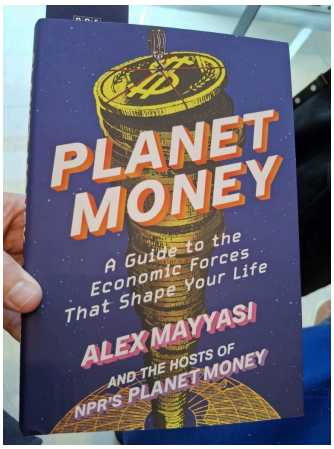
"I would argue that the health of our democracy involves people being able to consume and trust important information at scale," she continued. " If we want to be the kind of Republic that we want to be, we have to have information that supports this. And our Planet Money podcast is a prime example," she continued.

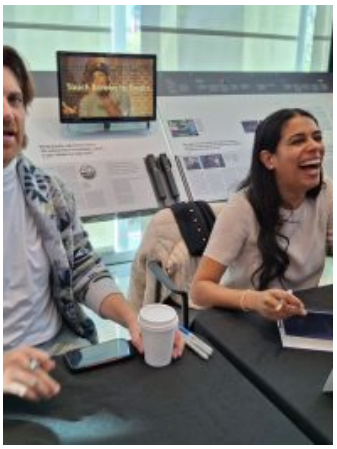
"We have a huge range of folks engaged in Planet Money who learn really important information, about things like asset bubbles and a

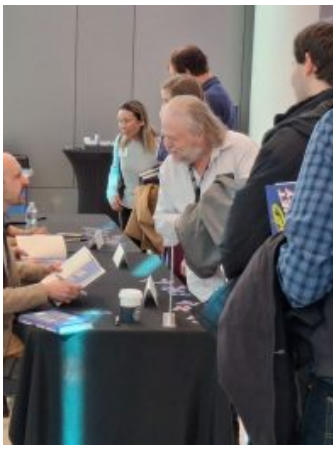
range of other topics, in ways that feel very entertaining and very engaging," Evans said.

"As I'm sure many of you in this room know, public funding has shifted for NPR, and so we no longer receive those direct dollars in the ways that we used to … and yet, the public support for this work is strong. And so I would say, if we want to be able to continue to be a country where important information is invested, is ingested and trusted at scale, we have to support more content like this," she said.

Dan can be reached at dan@thewellnews.com *and* @DanMcCue


PLANET MONEY
A Guide to the Economic Forces That Shape Your Life
ALEX MAYYASI
AND THE HOSTS OF NPR'S PLANET MONEY





Thank you from npr
Rachel Evans
Chief Development Officer

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